

the Senate floor, after a month, after the agreement was reached by the bipartisan group and the White House. That is why I am giving the maximum amount of flexibility to our Senate colleagues who are negotiating the bill. If the bipartisan group can finalize their agreement by Thursday, I will offer it as the pending substitute amendment, as I mentioned before. I just wanted to repeat that so people hear it loud and clear.

The bills I mentioned are the lowest common denominator and the most agreeable starting point, a package of bipartisan bills that nearly all the Senators have already supported this year, a package of bills that the bipartisan group is using as the basis of their framework. And once it is on the floor, we can then debate, amend, and work from there. It is not the final word.

There will be no doubt many Senators would want to offer additional items from the bipartisan framework or other issues: from transit to broadband, to resiliency, and more. And, of course, if the bipartisan group finalizes their product over the weekend, Senators can offer it as an amendment at that point, and I will make sure that that amendment is in order.

Let me repeat. Even if the text of the bipartisan framework isn't ready by Thursday and we agree to make the package of bipartisan bills that I mentioned the starting point, Senators can still work on the bipartisan framework and offer it as an amendment later on.

The bottom line is very simple. If Senators agree to start debate, there will be many, many opportunities for the bipartisan group to make their agreement the base of the bill. But if Republican Senators refuse to start debate, they would be denying the Senate an opportunity to consider the bipartisan amendment.

And this is not a new process. We have used it regularly here in the Senate, on the anti-Asian hate crimes bill, the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act. On both of those, the Senate agreed to start debate, just to proceed on a base bill, a shell bill. It took several weeks of amendments before everyone was ready to move forward, eventually and successfully. Both measures passed with significant bipartisan support.

If we did it there—on the anti-Asian hate bill, on the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act—we can do it here. There is no reason we can't do it here with infrastructure.

Look, Senators of good will on both sides want to finish the bipartisan infrastructure bill before the August recess. That is certainly my goal. But in order to finish the bill, we first need to agree to start. Let me repeat that. But in order to finish the bill, we first need to agree to start. That is the first step.

Let's all agree to start. That is what this week's vote is about, and I hope my Republican colleagues will join us in beginning debate.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, right now, there is a fire burning in Oregon the size of New York City. A heat wave recently rolled through the Pacific Northwest that melted power lines and cracked roadways in two. Hurricanes and flooding in the East have battered one community after the other. Earlier this year, a snowstorm engulfed the typically scorching State of Texas and claimed the lives of hundreds—hundreds—of people. And, of course, we saw what happened in Europe with the flooding.

These extreme, once-in-a-century weather events are now commonplace. The dangers of climate change are here, and they are real. Fighting climate change will take not only new technologies and new ways of thinking but something more basic: It will take people—people, lots of people—working together to fight climate change from the ground up.

This morning, I joined with my Democratic colleagues from the House and Senate to push a bold, new approach to fighting climate change that will help create thousands of good-paying jobs in the process: the Civilian Climate Corps, CCC.

The idea at the core of the Civilian Climate Corps harkens back to the New Deal, when hundreds of thousands of Americans were put to work on conservation and infrastructure projects across the country. During the Great Depression, President Roosevelt needed ways to put Americans to work and to do it fast, and he found a way to do it while having those workers do something enormously productive for their country: building public works and dams and bridges and airfields and flood and forest-fire prevention.

The Civilian Conservation Corps, as it was called at the time, was a brilliant idea—a success—that should be harnessed once again, this time to fight climate change.

The bottom line: We need a CCC for the 21st century. We can put Americans to work on climate and resiliency projects. We can put Americans to work on clean energy initiatives across the country. We can put Americans to work helping poorer and more disconnected communities handle the challenge of climate change. And we can create hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs, particularly focusing on the poorer communities, the communities of color that have been left out in the past.

The Civilian Climate Corps can be one of the largest employment projects and one of the largest environmental projects at the same time. I believe the Senate should work to make this a reality this year. I believe the CCC, the Civilian Climate Corps, should be one of the pillars of the American Jobs and Family Plan. As majority leader, I will ensure that CCC will be included in the upcoming budget reconciliation package in as big and bold a way as possible.

VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, later, the Senate will pass a long-overdue fix to the Crime Victims Fund to help Americans stitch back their lives after falling victim to violent crime.

As hard as it is to suffer the trauma of a violent crime, survivors almost always face enormous financial hardship in the immediate aftermath. Just think about healthcare or mental health services for victims of human trafficking or sexual assault, emergency housing for victims of serious domestic abuse, legal fees for those who try to pursue justice for the crime committed against them. Those services can cost tens of thousands of dollars. So for nearly 35 years, the Justice Department has operated a Crime Victims Fund that uses money from Federal convictions and fines to help survivors of violent crime. It is a simple idea. It has helped thousands and thousands of Americans during the most challenging moments of their lives.

But today, this popular and effective program is in danger of going into the red. Compared to 5 years ago, the Crime Victims Fund could fall to less than one-twentieth—one-twentieth—of its former size by the end of the next fiscal year. Well, the Senate is not going to abandon Americans who survived violent crimes. Today, the Senate will pass legislation to replenish the Crime Victims Fund and set it on a path toward long-term stability. The Crime Victims Fund has been a beacon of hope and healing for countless survivors over the decades. With today's vote, survivors of violent crime can rest assured that it will continue to be that beacon of hope and healing for decades more to come.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2382

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2382) to authorize the National Cyber Director to accept details from other elements of the Federal Government on non-reimbursable basis, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will now be placed on the calendar.

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF JENNIFER ANN ABRUZZO

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later today, the Senate will vote on President Biden's nominee to serve as general counsel for the National Labor Relations Board.

There actually shouldn't be a vacancy in this position. When President Biden took office, the person serving as the NLRB's top lawyer was still in the middle of a term to which the Senate had confirmed him. He was doing his job, serving the country, and had no intention to skip out of his responsibilities early.

But less than 30 minutes after pledging to heal and unify the country in his inaugural address, President Biden broke precedent and threatened to fire Peter Robb unless he resigned prematurely that very day.

At the very first instant that the new President's statements about norms, institutions, and governance ran up against the demands of the far left—well, the decision didn't take very long. Where Senate confirmation and fixed terms were supposed to create independence, this administration just wanted partisan loyalty.

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident. It has actually been a pattern. This small world of independent agencies has offered us actually a case study in the gap between the administration's unifying rhetoric on the one hand and its divisive actions on the other.

Back in March, the Biden administration took aim at another Senate-confirmed official, the general counsel for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This time, a full 2 years before her term was set to expire. Sharon Gustafson had been engaged in important work, particularly in defense of religious freedom in the workplace. But the President didn't want to wait for our system to play out properly. He broke with norms and he fired her.

Just this month, we witnessed the firing of Andrew Saul, the head of the Social Security Administration. Listen to this. He was just 2 years into a 6-year term. Mr. Saul had kept a critical agency functioning through a historically challenging year. He was not some partisan hack. We are talking about someone the Senate confirmed with 77 votes—77 votes—a bipartisan supermajority for Mr. Saul.

But powerful liberal interests got the President's ear. They wanted their own hand-picked insider. Norms and precedents had to go out the window. Now,

the American people deserve to trust in the independence of crucial watchdog agencies like these, but with these firings, this administration has instead decided to explore frontiers in partisan hardball.

We just spent years listening to the left and the media express outrage over personnel decisions and dismissals, many of which amounted to a heck of a lot less than the three I just mentioned.

VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, later today, the Senate is set to do some bipartisan legislating.

Back in 1984, Congress passed a Victims of Crime Act, which includes an important Federal program called a Crime Victims Fund. When criminals who commit Federal crimes are charged fines and penalties, some of that money flows into this fund. It goes to State-level programs that help crime victims with services, like counseling and emergency shelters. It also helps compensate the victims directly with their expenses, like medical costs, mental health, funeral expenses, and lost wages. Some of the money also goes specifically to fight child abuse.

This fund needs to rest on firm financial footing, but right now it doesn't have that firm footing. Its balance has been shrinking fast. Congress needs to act to prevent big cuts to victims' services, particularly in rural areas.

A number of Senators on both sides have come together and produced bipartisan reforms that will strengthen the program and keep assistance flowing to the survivors of Federal crimes.

The junior Senator from Pennsylvania has a further amendment to make sure the program can't be used as part of budgetary shell games that deliberately cloud Federal accounting. I will support both Senator TOOMEY's amendment and our colleagues' legislation later today.

But on this subject, for goodness' sake, elected officials should not just be racing to replenish the Crime Victims Fund before it runs out. Leaders at local, State, and Federal levels should be acting to confront the surge in violent crime that is plaguing our Nation.

For about a year now, the political left has grown obsessed with the notion that police officers are inherently bad, policing is inherently evil, and what vulnerable neighborhoods really need is less enforcement of the laws.

As one House Member has informed us:

Defunding police means defunding police.

Another put it this way:

Defunding the police isn't radical, it is real.

Well, academic research has confirmed something troubling. The broad anti-police backlash that sometimes follows high-profile, police-involved in-

cidents subsequently leads to less safety, more crime, and more murders. Sure enough, murders have shot up in cities and communities all across our country.

My hometown of Louisville has seen 66 percent more homicides than we had seen by this time last year—66 percent more. Last year was a record year for carjackings and yet Louisville is on pace to match it once again. The city's police department is short more than 200 sworn officers due to low recruitment, low morale, and resignations.

Leaders should be working to contain this damage, but instead of delivering a sober, responsible message, many of the most prominent Democratic politicians instead grabbed their megaphones and amplified the anti-police sentiment as loud as possible.

As I have noted before, attacking and insulting the police is not just a bad strategy for public safety across the board; the data shows it is an especially disruptive approach to advancing racial justice.

The truth is this:

Larger police forces save lives and the lives saved are disproportionately Black lives.

That is another expert study.

So I am glad the Senate will take the important step today of reforming and strengthening the Crime Victims Fund. It certainly belies any notion that we can't legislate in a bipartisan way. We absolutely can and we do. When a bipartisan outcome is what the Democratic majority leader truly wants, it actually makes it possible.

But I wish anti-crime, pro-police, pro-public safety attitudes and policies could be just as bipartisan at the State, local, and Federal levels as today's vote will likely be. Standing up for law enforcement and the innocent people they protect should never be limited to one side of the aisle.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Kenneth Allen Polite, Jr., of Louisiana, to be an Assistant Attorney General.